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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**MIAMI, FLORIDA MAN INDICTED IN SCHEME TO DEFRAUD
INDIANA MEDICAID OF MORE THAN \$1 MILLION IN
CHILDREN'S DENTAL CARE SERVICES**

PRESS RELEASE

Susan W. Brooks, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana, announced that GABRIEL "REGGIE" HARDEN, 46, Miami, Florida, was indicted by a federal grand jury sitting in Indianapolis for Health Care Fraud and Money Laundering, following an investigation by the Health and Human Services Inspector General, Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigations, and Indiana Attorney General Medicaid Fraud Control Unit.

The indictment alleges that HARDEN operated mobile dental offices in Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky from 2000 through May 2004 under the name "Dental Express." The mobile units marketed dental services almost exclusively to Medicaid-eligible children, calling on schools, public housing and day care centers. HARDEN, who lived in Florida throughout the scheme, hired dental assistants from Florida and transported them to Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky, where

they often lived together in an apartment paid for by HARDEN. The mobile dental units often had maintenance problems and occasionally lacked basic features of a medical office, such as running or hot water. A panoramic x-ray machine on the mobile unit broke shortly after the operation started and remained inoperable for many months. The indictment alleges that HARDEN put pressure on the dental assistants and dentists to perform dental procedures regardless of medical necessity. HARDEN set up a standard protocol of several sets of x-rays that were to be taken of all Medicaid-eligible patients by the dental assistants that were not ordered by the dentists and were often not developed before the children left the mobile unit. The x-rays were taken based purely on the fact that Medicaid paid for these x-rays and not because they were medically necessary.

The crux of HARDEN'S scheme to defraud was that he instructed the dentists, and especially the dental assistants he hired in Florida, to put sealants on children's primary, or "baby" teeth, ostensibly whenever there was a stain or possible decay on the tooth. HARDEN, who is not a dentist, put constant pressure on the dental assistants to use these sealants, including strongly suggesting quotas of the procedure per child that should be performed. A sealant is a preventive procedure for children's teeth for which Medicaid does not pay. So, HARDEN billed for the procedure as if the sealants were cavity fillings, which are covered by Medicaid. Cavity fillings are a restorative procedure that require substantially more expertise and time, including drilling through the tooth enamel by a dentist, than application of a sealant.

HARDEN billed Indiana Medicaid approximately \$4 million total during the time period, while more than \$1 million is alleged to be fraudulent. Substantial proceeds of the fraud were deposited into bank accounts controlled by HARDEN and subsequently withdrawn by HARDEN in amounts in excess of \$10,000, which is a type of money laundering.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Winfield D. Ong and Erin R. Lewis, who are prosecuting the case for the government, HARDEN faces a maximum possible prison sentence of 10 years and a maximum possible fine of \$250,000. An initial hearing will be scheduled before a U.S. Magistrate Judge in Indianapolis.

The indictment is an allegation only, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at trial or by guilty plea.

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